

*The Afflictions of good Men no Ar-
gument against a Providence.*

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S E R M O N

Occasion'd by the DEATH of

Mr. ROBERT WEBB,
Clothier in **TAUNTON;**

Preach'd on *Thursday Dec. 12. 1728.*

By **THOMAS LUCAS.** *R*

L O N D O N:

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The Afflictions of good Men no Argument against a Providence.

SERMON

Of the Afflictions of good Men

MR. ROBERT WEBB, Minister of the Gospel at Newbury.



Printed on Thursday Dec. 11. 1772.

By THOMAS LUCAS.

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TO
Mrs. RUTH WEBB.

MADAM,

AS the following Sermon was preach'd, so now 'tis publish'd by the express Order of your deceased Husband. This I mention not upon your Account, but my own, as the best Apology I can make, for sending a Discourse into the World, composed under so many Disadvantages.

'Tis not difficult to guess at the Reasons, which induced Mr. WEBB to make and sign this Order. He hoped, no doubt, that as the Subject appointed for his Funeral Text had often minister'd to his own Relief and Support under his many Afflictions ; so a Ser-

The DEDICATION.

mon upon it might promote its Usefulness to others in the like Circumstances; and particularly to your self and his dear Children, who he foresaw would be greatly afflicted at his Death.

If the following Discourse, with all its Imperfections, shall answer these good and valuable Ends, the View of the Deceased will, I believe, be intirely fulfill'd; and I shall be highly pleased with an Opportunity of being serviceable to others, and particularly a Family I greatly esteem and respect; as likewise of shewing at the same time how much I am,

M A D A M,

Your affectionate Friend

and humble Servant,

Tho. Lucas.

Psal. xxxiv. 19.

Many are the Afflictions of the Righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.

OUR deceased Friend and Brother, Mr. ROBERT WEBB, appointed these Words of the Psalmist to be the Subject of his Funeral Sermon, which contain the Matter both of his Experience and Faith. For he endured many Afflictions a long time; but as he could reckon himself in the Number of the Righteous, he was comforted and supported with the Hope, that his good and gracious God would in his own Time give him a Deliverance out of them all.

The Text consists of two Propositions, which I shall consider in the same Order in which they lie. And accordingly I shall endeavour,

- I. To explain and illustrate this Proposition: *Many are the Afflictions of the Righteous.*

- II. To vindicate this Expression of the Psalmist both against the Objections urged by Infidels to destroy the Doctrine of Providence, and likewise the Scruples of some good Men.

III. To shew the Sense and Import of the other Proposition: *But the Lord delivereth him out of them all.* And then,

IV. I shall conclude the Discourse with a few Reflections, suitable to the Subject, and the melancholy Occasion of this Solemnity.

I. I shall endeavour to explain and illustrate this Proposition: *Many are the Afflictions of the Righteous.*

Now by *the Righteous* here we are to understand no doubt the good Man, who in this Psalm, as well as in many other Parts of the holy Scriptures, is denominated sometimes by one Quality and sometimes by another, as best suits the Occasion of his being introduced. So that when the royal Author says, *Many are the Afflictions of the Righteous*, 'tis the same as if he had said, many are the Afflictions of the good Man.

And of the Truth of this we may be convinced by daily Observation, with the assistance of a small degree of that Charity, which our Religion recommends and enjoins. For we find it exemplified in numberless Instances. Virtue is often in distress, and Men of eminent Piety and Holiness are as much distinguish'd by their Calamities and Misfortunes; their Afflictions are as conspicuous as their Faith, and as various as their Graces. Their good *Works shine before Men*, and spread a Glory around 'em; but 'tis thro' a Cloud of Evils, with which they are encompassed on every side. A Mind devoted to God, adorn'd with noble and virtuous Principles, labouring to grow up into a divine Resemblance, and to improve in the heavenly Life, often struggles with the Infirmities, and groans under the heavy Prossure of a weak and diseased Body. The just and honest Tradesman shall be injured by Men of no honesty or conscience. The prudent Care and Industry of
I VI the

the good Man shall meet with ill success, and his Crosses and Disappointments so weaken his hands, that he cannot execute the charitable Purposes and pious Desires of his Heart. Instances of this kind are very common in the present Age, and History will inform us, that they have been so from the earliest Accounts of time.

And methinks 'tis strange, that amidst so many plain Examples of this Truth, which every Age has abounded with, any should ever be found to call it in question, or ever to imagine good Men to be exempted from any Calamities of this Life, when the best of Men have from time to time been involved in the heaviest and most distressing circumstances.

And yet it seems there were such Men of old, Men who accounted worldly Prosperity and external Advantages to be an indication of the special Love of God, and of his Approbation of the Principles and Conduct of the Persons who enjoy'd them; and on the other hand, that great Afflictions were marks of his Hatred, and dislike of their Intentions and Practices who endured them.

Such, for instance, were *Job's* Friends. While the Candle of the Almighty was upon his Head, his Children were about him, he wash'd his Steps with Butter, his Glory was fresh in him, and his Bow was renew'd in his Hand; while he continued in such flourishing Circumstances, these Men, no doubt, join'd with his Neighbours in applauding him for his great Piety, Justice, and Charity, and the just Rewards of his superior Merit. But when once the Scene was alter'd, and *Job* became as remarkable for his Afflictions, as he had been for his abundance of outward Blessings; these same Persons in common with others immediately change their language, and begin to suspect his Integrity, and

and interpret his complicated Trials as expressions of the divine Vengeance for his Hypocrisy and secret Wickedness. They thought such surprizing and uncommon Calamities could never befall a righteous Man. And hence *Elihu* says to him: *Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished being innocent? or where were the Righteous cut off? Even as I have seen, they that plough Iniquity and sow Wickedness reap the same. And we find some such Persons likewise in our Saviour's time, Men who reckon'd the Galileans, whose Blood Pilate mingled with their Sacrifices, to be Sinners above all the Galileans, and the Eighteen, on whom the Tower of Siloam fell, to be Sinners above all that dwell in Jerusalem, because they suffered such things. Nor is it uncommon in the present Age for Men to draw very harsh and uncharitable Inferences from their Neighbours Adversity, as if they thought, the Righteous were exempted from the common fate of Mankind, who are said to be born to Trouble, as the Sparks fly upward.*

But sure such a Method of judging is very unjust, and most of all inexcusable in Christians, who have not only Instances of the contrary that frequently occur, but may find upon sacred Record both express Declarations of the same importance with this in our Text, and Memoirs of eminently good Men to exemplify the Truth of them. *The Righteous and the Wise and their Works are in God's hands, as Solomon truly observes; and yet he adds at the same time, that no Man knoweth either Love or Hatred by all that is before them: for all things come alike to all. There is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked, to the good and to the*

• Job iv. 7, 8.

• Luke xiii. 1-4.

• Job v. 7.

• Eccles. ix. 1, 2.

clean,

clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the Wicked, so is the Sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an Oath.

Nor does the dispensation of the Gospel give the good Man any reason to hope for an exemption from worldly Trouble, but he is taught to expect the quite contrary. For Christ, the Author of this Religion, who was himself a *Man of Sorrows and acquainted with Grief*, was so far from flattering Men into his Church with promises of Security from earthly Calamitys; that he tells them plainly, ⁵ *in the World they shall have Tribulation.* And his Apostles represent Afflictions as the Lot and Portion of good Men in this Life. Accordingly St. Paul calls them the ⁶ *Afflictions of the Gospel.* And the Author to the *Hebrews* is very full and expresse to this purpose. ⁷ *Whom, says he, the Lord loveth, he chasteneth; and scourgeth every Son, whom he receiveth. If ye endure not Chastisement, whereof all are partakers; then are ye Bastards, and not Sons.*

And now, if to such full and expresse declarations, we add the accounts which the sacred Historians give of the great and many Afflictions of Men, who had not only the Reputation of being good Men, but the attestation of God himself to their Sincerity and Uprightness; methinks we should be effectually cured of such an unfair way of reasoning, and kept for the future from judging hard of our Neighbours, whom Providence suffers to fall into many Tribulations and Afflictions.

Abraham was the Father of the faithful, and God himself stiles him *his Friend*. *Moses* was the

⁵ John xvi. 33.

⁶ 2 Tim. i. 8.

⁷ Heb. xii. 6, 7, 8.

meekest Man alive, of whom God testifys that he was *a faithful Servant in all his House*. Job has the Testimony of the Lord, that *there was none like him in the Earth, a perfect and upright Man, and one that feared God, and eschewed Evil*. David was *a Man after God's own Heart*; of whom as to the *Flesh*, Christ came (who is God over all blessed for evermore.) The Apostles also were Heroes in Virtue and Religion, and abounded with marks of the divine Favour and Approbation. Now all these Men, and many others renown'd for Religion and their uncommon attainments in Virtue; and whose sincerity none can question, it being attested by God himself, were yet involved in great and many Afflictions.

So that upon the whole it may be said down as a certain and evident Truth, that the best of Men are liable to sore Afflictions and Calamities in this Life; or, in the phrase of our Text, *Many are the Afflictions of the righteous*.

2. Indeed these words of the Psalmist, and what our Saviour and his Apostles say to the same purpose, have been stretch'd by some much beyond the true design and intention of them. For some of the antient Christians concluded from such Scriptures as I have mention'd, that sincere Righteousness and worldly Prosperity were incompatible, and could never meet in the same Person: That an easy Passage thro' this World could never be the Lot of the Righteous: And that unless a Man endured many Afflictions in this Life, he had reason to fear that his Portion of good things was confin'd to the Earth, and that he should have no reward in Heaven. Hence many in the first Ages of the Church plunged themselves unnecessarily into Trouble, laid themselves open to Persecution and Violence without a Call, and

and even courted Chains and Fetters, Dungeons and Prisons, Racks and Tortures, Fire and Faggot, when they might have escaped them with a good Conscience. They were told by the Captain of their Salvation, that *they must take up their Cross and follow him*; and therefore if no Cross was laid upon them, they sought after it. Because the Apostles confirm'd the Souls of the suffering Disciples, by telling them that *thro' much Tribulation they should enter into the Kingdom of God*; they thought in the Nature of things, and by the appointment of Heaven, there was no obtaining it without wading thro' Tribulation.

But sure this is not the Doctrine of the Scriptures, nor will any thing said by the Authors either of the New or Old Testament bear the weight of it. Our Saviour indeed seems to make suffering Afflictions to be the fate of all his Disciples and Followers. And the Apostles make Tribulation a distinguishing badge between the Children of God and the rest of the World. But then, such phrases are manifestly adapted to the Circumstances of the Church in those times of fiery Trial and furious Persecutions. In that Age Men espoused the Christian Religion with the utmost hazard of their Lives and Fortunes; and 'twas great odds but an open and steady profession of it would plunge its Votarys into Afflictions of the most shocking nature. Considering therefore the condition of the Church in this its infant State, there is nothing in such Expressions of Scripture, as we find in the Gospels and Epistles, which represent Afflictions as inseparable from sincere Christians, but what suited then with common and ordinary matters of Fact. But then such Declarations of the state of good Men in those difficult times should not be made the Rule of

Providence in After-Ages, when the Church enjoy'd rest, was grown up from infant weakness to a more confirm'd state, had the advantage of a national Establishment, and had Kings to be her nursing Fathers, and Queens her nursing Mothers. In such favourable Junctures good Men might openly avow their Principles, act up to their Sentiments, and walk in all respects as becomes the Gospel, without risking their Lives, Liberties, or any other worldly Comforts and Enjoyments. They might in such Seasons of Tranquillity, and Liberty of Conscience, be religious without enduring the Chastisement, which the Author to the *Hebrews* mentions, as the certain Portion of Christians in his days.

Indeed these words of the Psalmist, which I am now considering, are suited to all Times and Seasons, and laid down by *David* as a Proposition that will hold true in every Age of the World. For even now, at so great a distance from his time, it may with as much justice and propriety as then be said, *Many are the Afflictions of the righteous*. But sure these words were not design'd to assert, that a Man cannot be righteous without suffering many Afflictions. For to say this, would be to offend against the Generation of the Children of God, as much as to infer from the Troubles and Calamities of good Men, that they *have cleansed their Hearts in vain, and washed their Hands in Innocence*. For such an interpretation would lead us to censure and condemn as unrighteous, every one who enjoys an easy and prosperous condition in this Life, let him give in other respects ever so strong and clear Proofs of his Integrity and Uprightness. No doubt but

Psal. lxxiii. 13, 15.

there

there are many who are rich in worldly Substance, and in Faith too, whose Bodies prosper in Health and Soundness, even as their Souls prosper; and whose earthly Comforts grow and increase, as do their Graces and Virtues. When therefore our Author lays it down as a general truth, *Many are the Afflictions of the Righteous*, the Indefinite must not be converted into an Universal, as if the Rule had no Exception; but his Sense seems to comprehend these two things:

(1.) That the Righteous are liable to many (*i. e.* to all kinds of) Afflictions in this Life. There is no external Evil under the Sun, to which human Nature is subject, but the Righteous may be invaded and exercised with it, as well as other Men. However, in virtue of a special and peculiar Providence, which constantly guards and attends them, their supreme and ultimate Happiness, and every thing relating thereto, is safe and secure, insomuch that nothing shall endanger or obstruct it, but every thing contribute to its Establishment and Growth; yet there is no just ground for them to expect, on account of their Integrity, an Exemption from any kinds of external Afflictions, farther than their main Interests and Concerns require. And of this they are not competent Judges, but it must be left to the only wise God, who alone knows what Condition of Life is safest and most profitable for his People. This therefore is the least that can be collected from these words of the Psalmist: That the Righteous are as liable to the Troubles of this Life as other Men. Nay, I apprehend no Inconvenience in supposing that our Author intended something more than this, *viz.*

(2.) That the Righteous are many times exercised with more and greater Afflictions than the Wicked:
that

that instead of being distinguished from the Ungodly by an uninterrupted Series of Successes, and earthly Blessings; Men of this Character are frequently plunged into deeper and more grievous Calamities, than their impious Neighbours. And this is no more than what this good Man remarks upon other occasions, particularly where he says of the Wicked, that *they are not in trouble, neither are they plagued like other Men*¹: that is, like good Men, who fear God, trust in him, and serve him.

Not that, as I said before, this is always the Case: for sometimes no doubt religious Men have been crown'd with an abundance of earthly Prosperity, and Providence has interposed in a surprising manner for their Protection against the Evils and Misfortunes which have threaten'd them. But then the same infinitely wise and good God sometimes sees it necessary to afflict others of his Children with such degrees of Calamity and Distress, as perhaps few of his Enemies feel and endure in this Life. Nay, I think it a matter too plain to be deny'd, that the Righteousness and Integrity of many good Men have proved the Occasion of grievous Afflictions. Not to mention the Martyrs of old, who were persecuted, imprison'd, tortur'd, and murder'd for Righteousness sake²; 'tis not uncommon now a-days for Men to suffer very much, in their worldly Interest, on account of their own Sincerity and Uprightness. The rectitude and honesty of their own Intentions, and the simplicity of their Hearts, void of all base and unjust Designs, make them often over credulous and too favourable in their sentiments of others, and by that means render them

¹ Psal. lxxiii. 5.

² Mat. v.

a Prey to evil Men. And thus while those who abound with the subtlety and cunning of the Serpent, but are void of the innocence of the Dove, prosper in the World; the righteous and undesigning Man shall be defrauded of the Fruit of his Labour and the Gain of his honest Endeavours. I might mention other cases, wherein Probity and Virtue lay the good Man open to many Afflictions, in the present corrupt and vicious state of the World.

But, says the Infidel, how is this consistent with the Perfections of God, who is supposed to govern the World? Can it be imagin'd that if all things were under his Management and Controul, that impious and wicked Men would be suffer'd to prosper and bear sway; whilst the righteous, who obey his Laws, labour to act up to the Dignity of their Nature, and to discharge the Dutys of every Relation, are plagued all the Day long, and chasten'd every Morning? Would the Oppressor, the unjust, covetous, and unmerciful Man grow rich by Ungodliness and Cruelty; and he that labours to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God, lose his Substance, and fall into manifold Troubles on account of his Uprightness; would it be thus with the Good and with the Bad, the Righteous and the Unrighteous, were the World under the Direction and Care of an infinitely wise, powerful, just, and good Being? Are not such Instances plain Indications, that the World is in a state of Anarchy, and that the Doctrine of Providence is nothing but a Dream of fanciful Enthusiasts?

Indeed the Doctrine of our Text, together with the Prosperity of the Wicked, has puzzled some good Men upon a hasty and inconsiderate View of matters. For no less a Man than *David* confesses,

esses, that this thing was like to have been too mighty for him. *His Feet*, he says, *had well nigh slept*; he was envious at the Wicked, who prosper'd in the World; and began to think, that himself had cleansed his Heart and his Hands in vain, because he was plagued all the Day long, and chasten'd every Morning. And 'tis common for Persons now, to startle at such Appearances, and even to have their Faith shock'd upon the like occasions; especially if it happens to be their own case, or the case of others for whom they have any special concern. Having therefore explained and settled the meaning of the Psalmist, I shall now proceed,

II. To vindicate this Expression of the Psalmist, *Many are the Afflictions of the Righteous*, both against the Objections urged by Infidels to destroy the Doctrine of Providence, and likewise the Scruples of some good Men.

And I hope to make it appear, that this Assertion does no ways derogate from the Care and Superintendency of the great God; but that he may, consistently with his Justice, Wisdom, and Goodness, suffer the Righteous to endure many Afflictions in this Life.

I. The Afflictions of good Men cannot impeach the Justice of God, if it be consider'd that he has an absolute Right to dispose of his own Favours. Were we perfectly innocent, the Author of our Being would do us no wrong in afflicting us, provided that upon the whole our being in such Circumstances were preferable to Non-existence. He was at liberty whether to give us Being or not: and therefore if upon settling the Ballance of Accounts, and placing the
Benefit

Benefit of Creation, together with the Comforts that remain to us, against the Evils and Infelicities we endure ; if, I say, upon a fair and just Estimate of our Afflictions and Blessings, it appear, that we have no reason to wish that we had never been ; but on the contrary have cause to be thankful for Existence ; we have then no injustice done us, but must place the Overplus of Good to the account of Favours received ; and this on supposition that we could expect no Reward after this Life, but were upon our Death to cease to be. But if it be taken into the Account, that *all have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God*, and that by their Rebellion and Misbehaviour, they deserve much sorer Punishment, than is inflicted upon any of them here : then the most afflicted Saint cannot with any colour of reason complain of Injustice, even upon supposition that his present Circumstances render Death preferable to Life. For let his Afflictions be ever so many and great, still if he had his full deserts they would be much worse. And therefore upon the whole matter, he ought to justify God, and say with the Prophet, *There is no reason for a living Man to complain, a Man for the punishment of his Sins.*

2. But it may still be said : That however the Righteous consider'd as God's Creatures, and as Sinners, have no room to exhibit a Charge of Injustice against him under the severest Afflictions of this Life ; yet, when compared with the vicious and ungodly, they certainly deserve better Treatment and a happier Fate, than those : and therefore they have reason to complain of the Inequality of Providence, when they reflect upon

³ Lam. iii. 39.

their own Misfortunes and Calamities, and behold at the same time the Abundance of earthly Emoluments and Advantages that flow in upon the Unrighteous.

In answer to this Objection it may be sufficient to say, That there will be another Life after this, when the Righteous shall obtain a complete Deliverance out of all his Troubles, and shall be amply recompensed for all the Evils and Afflictions he suffer'd here. Thus he shall have *Beauty for Ashes, the Oil of Joy for Mourning, and the Garment of Praise for the Spirit of Heaviness*. But on the other hand, the Wicked must in a little time leave all his earthly good things behind him, and enter into a state of unspeakable Misery; so that after Death there will be an eternal Difference put between the Righteous and the Wicked. And on this account it may be justly said of the former, that it shall go well with him, for he shall eat of the Fruit of his doings; and of the latter, it shall go ill with him, for the Reward of his Hands shall be given him. And this leads me to consider another grand Exception against this Doctrine, viz.

3. That it does not seem to suit with the regard God professes to have for Virtue and virtuous Men, and with the Assurances he has made to such Persons that he will withhold no good thing from them. Nay, in the preceding part of this Psalm we have express Promises of this nature made to good Men: *There is no want to them that fear him. The young Lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.* How are such Promises as these fulfill'd to good Men, who from

⁴ Psal. xxxiv. 9.

Year to Year, even to their Death, converse with Troubles and Misfortunes?

The Doctrine of our Text rightly consider'd is so far from being repugnant to such Declarations of the divine Goodness and Compassion, that 'tis in reality an Expression and Discovery of it. For the very reason of God's afflicting the Righteous is, that he is very pitiful and of tender Mercies. As the cutting off a Limb to save the more vital Parts from a Mortification, or using Incisions, Vesicatories and other painful Applications to save Life, is an Indication of the Care and Regard of the Surgeon or Physician; so a Course of afflictive Providences to a good Man is a Discovery of the Care and Goodness of God. He does not afflict nor grieve his Children willingly; put them to unnecessary Pain; or lay any greater weight upon them, than is necessary to keep down their Corruptions, to correct and destroy their vicious Habits, to improve and invigorate their virtuous Dispositions, and answer the gracious and merciful Ends which he has in view. 'Tis but *if need be, that good Men are in heaviness thro' manifold Temptations.* When Afflictions are for his Peoples good, God makes use of such wholesome Severities, and never but when there is such an occasion of 'em.

But how, you'll say, can Afflictions be good? are they not grievous and troublesome? Is not Health better than Sickness, Ease than Pain, Sight than Dimness, Riches than Scarcity, and Success than Crosses and Disappointments?

In order to settle this Point, and to fix the true Standard of Good and Evil, we are to consider what is our ultimate and supreme Happiness.

For that is good for us, which either mediately or immediately contributes towards this Happiness; and that is evil or hurtful which tends to deprive us of it. Now were all our Views terminated at Death, were we to have no Existence after this short Life is ended; then that only would deserve the name of Good, which contributes to the ease and comfort of our present Condition; and with a great deal of reason we might say with the *Epicure*, *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die*. But this is not our Hope, we are design'd for an eternal State either of Happiness or Misery, after Death; and therefore our Estimate of Good and Evil must be formed from the Tendency of things to prepare us for, and ascertain our Happiness or Misery in that State. For as there is no Proportion between Time and Eternity, so neither is there between the Concerns of one and the other. Suppose therefore the Happiness of the other World were repugnant to the Ease and Comfort of this Life, and could not be obtain'd, but at the expence of every thing that is grateful and pleasant to the sensual Appetite; yet all the Inconveniences, Crosses, and Sufferings of this short and uncertain Life, should cheerfully be endured and consented to as good, considering them as *working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory*. We should then have reason to kiss the Rod, to mix Thankfulness with our Groans, and say with David, *'Tis good for us, that we have been afflicted*.

This now, is the true state of the Case. Good Men are taught to look on themselves but as Strangers and Sojourners here, as design'd for an

† 2 Cor. iv. 17.

‡ Psal. cxix. 71.

eternal, unalterable State after this short Life has a Period put to it by Death. For this State they were born into the World, for this they were regenerated by Grace, for this they live, and labour, and strive. This World is but a short Passage into another. Here they have no continuing City, but are seeking one to come. They are upon a Journey towards a City, which is to be their eternal Habitation. And hence they are taught to esteem the various Occurrences and Incidents of this World, as either good or evil, advantageous or hurtful to them, according as they affect their Progress homeward. We are now in a probationary Condition, and are to improve our selves in Virtue, in order to be meet for an eternal state of Happiness. When therefore we would pass a Judgment upon any thing which befalls us, we are not to consider it, as it affects the Senses either with Pain or Pleasure, but as it concerns our future Interest. Such a particular Circumstance, such an Affair, such an Occurrence, what Influence has it upon my main Concerns? Does it assist or retard me in the Christian Race, which must be finish'd before I die, or I shall lose the Prize? If it tends to hinder my Course towards Perfection, to defile my Mind, to make me earthly and sensual, to pall my Appetite for heavenly things, and to make me indifferent in the Affairs of Religion; be it ever so pleasing and agreeable to Sense, 'tis evil and hurtful; let it recommend it self to the animal Part, and address to the Passions with ever so many grateful and tempting Appearances, 'tis still pernicious. On the other hand, whatever tends to aid and promote my heavenly Course; to set me more at liberty for Religion; to disengage my Affections from earthly things; to make me more spiritual,
devoted

devoted to God, and intent upon the concerns of a future Life; whatever, I say, has such a tendency, is for my good, how afflictive and troublesome soever it is to Sense and the carnal Appetite.

Now tho the best of Men know not how any external Circumstances and Incidents will operate upon the Mind, and what aspect they may have upon their spiritual Affairs, before they happen, and so are incapable of choosing for themselves; yet God knows perfectly well how things will work upon us, and affect us in these respects. And therefore in tender Pity and Compassion to his People, who seek him, and resign themselves up to his Conduct, he puts them into such Circumstances, as are most advantageous and profitable to their better Interest. If outward Prosperity is proper for them, and the smiles of Providence will bring them nearer to God, inspire them with Thankfulness and Gratitude, Charity and Benevolence, quicken their Desires, and engage their Labours after the bread that endures to everlasting Life, and these valuable ends cannot be so effectually secured and promoted any other way; good Men shall then be encompassed with as many earthly Blessings, as are necessary for such purposes, and as are consistent with their station in Life, and the relation they bear to the main System. But if God sees that Prosperity will do his People hurt, as to their better interest, affect them with Pride, make them earthly-minded, secure, covetous, cold and lifeless in spiritual matters; and on the contrary, that Afflictions are necessary to rouse and awaken them out of their spiritual slumbers, quicken their holy desires, and make them more heavenly; if this be the Case, he will exercise them with such Afflictions as shall

shall in the end turn to their advantage, tho' they thro' ignorance may deprecate the uncommon and necessary Discipline. And thus he afflicts the righteous, because he is good, because his Mercy endureth for ever, and because he has said, *they that seek him shall not want any good thing.* The righteous therefore has the greatest reason to be easy and satisfy'd amidst all his Afflictions. By referring himself to God, who chastens him in mercy, he escapes all the intricacies and mazes, in which he would otherwise lose and bewilder himself. His way is plain, so that he has no need to disturb and perplex himself about the event of things. He has but one work to mind, and that is, to fear God and work Righteousness; and then he may be certain all will end well at last.

And now I hope I have sufficiently vindicated the Conduct of Providence in afflicting good Men, from the imputation of Cruelty in God, who governs and directs all such Events; and shewn how we may reconcile such Dispensations with his regard to Virtue, and the gracious Promises he has made to those who fear him. Afflictions upon the righteous Man tend to the cure of his spiritual Maladies, subdue his exorbitant Passions, mortify him to the World, and all the hurtful Pleasures and Vanities of it, raise his desires from Earth to Heaven, excite and invigorate his Virtues, bring him to examine himself, to practise neglected Dutys, to prepare for Death, and to labour after a greater meetness for the heavenly State. If these things are true, as they certainly are, it may be said, as *David* expresses it, *'Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.'*

Psalm. lxxiii. 1.

4. But after all it may be urged: That altho the reason and tendency of some Afflictions are easily discern'd, and they may be improved as Chastisements of a tender and compassionate Father; yet others are dark and myſterious, ſeem to thwart the divine Promiſe, and obſtruct the righteous Man's Progreſs, in ſome particular and perhaps eminent branch of moral Goodneſs. Such, for inſtance, is the Caſe of thoſe whoſe Station gives them an opportunity of doing much good, and they are deſirous to uſe both their Subſtance and Power for the ſupport of Religion, the relief of the Poor, and the benefit of their fellow Creatures in general; and yet after the moſt prudent Care and greateſt Industry, they come to be ſo weaken'd and enfeebled, by Loſſes and Diſappointments, as to be render'd in a great meaſure incapable of farther Uſefulneſs. And the like may be ſaid of thoſe, who being much addicted to Piety and Devotion, chooſe to retire from the buſtle and cares of the World, in order to converse with God, improve in an heavenly Temper, and give up themſelves to Meditation and Prayer, Reading and other religious Dutys; but contrary to their inclinations, are unavoidably involved in the Hurries and Incumbrances of the World, which breaking in upon their retirement, and interrupting their uſual courſe of Duties, occaſion them by degrees to abate and decrease in the Life and Spirit of their Devotion, as likewiſe in that ſenſible Pleaſure, with which it was wont to be attended. And how can ſuch Diſpenſations be ſuppoſed to answer any wiſe and valuable Ends?

In answer to this Objection, I ſhall not deny, that good Men are often exerciſed with Providences, which are as dark and myſterious as they are

are afflictive and grievous. But then I must deny the inferences drawn from this Truth, as highly unjust and inconsequential. For, the darkness of any Providence does by no means excuse an impatient and fretful Temper under it, nor does it render a religious Man incapable of improving the Dispensation to very good and valuable Ends and Purposes.

1. That impatience and fretfulness in such Circumstances is inexcusable, will appear if it be considered, that the ways of God are as his Laws, all holy, just, and good, however some of them are unsearchable and past finding out. Tho Clóuds and Darknes are round about him, yet Righteousness and Judgment are the Habitation of his Throne. The righteous therefore may very safely repose himself in the hands of the great Governor of the World, whether he thinks fit to acquaint him with the Reasons of his Conduct or not. Nay in the most intricate and perplex'd condition he ought to consider, that a special and peculiar Providence guards and attends him; that therefore the most obscure and mysterious Dispensations are wisely ordered for his Advantage; that the divine Perfections are constantly engaged, tho sometimes imperceptibly, for his good; that his heavenly Father directs Contingencies, has the management of every thing that seems to annoy or offend him, and that he will not suffer any thing to befall him to his real hurt or damage. Besides it ought to be consider'd, that God is not accountable to any of his Creatures for the Reasons of his Conduct. *He taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say to him, What doest thou?* Tho the good Man may lawfully beg of God, in

a meek, humble, and submissive manner, to ² shew him wherefore he contends with him; yet it favours of Pride and Arrogance to make a peremptory demand of this as his due. If he, whose Kingdom rules over all, refuses to gratify our too curious Inquiries, or to answer our impertinent Requests of this kind, he does us no injustice by defrauding us of our right; and therefore to grow impatient with our ignorance, and fret and murmur against God, is impious and uncreaturally. And yet unless he thinks fit to give an account of himself, and the Reasons and Ends of his Dispensations we must needs be ignorant of many of them. Darkneſs and Obscurity in these matters is no more than the necessary and unavoidable Consequence of our present Condition. For God himself is incomprehensible, and what wonder if his ways are past finding out? His Knowledge none can measure, nor can any fathom the depths of his Understanding. A thousand things open to his View, which are the Reasons and Motives of his Conduct, and render it perfectly beautiful and wise; but are above our reach or conception, and escape our most sagacious and laborious Search.

And how can we expect otherwise than to abide in darkness when our intellectual Faculties are so weak and narrow, that we are forced to consider the divine Dispensations, for the most part singly, and without taking into the Account the Circumstances with which they are attended, and the almost infinite relations and respects they bear to other things. We cannot perceive in numberless instances the particular occasions of Providence, nor many things with which 'tis circum-

² Job x. ii.

stanced, nor what views it has to future matters. And whilst we thus strip it of all relations and aspects, which are necessary to give it an amiable appearance; 'tis no wonder if it seems to us deformed, unshapely, confused, mangled, and absurd. "We can as well judge of the Beauty, Design and Spirit of a Poem by some loose incoherent pieces, and fragments of it; as of the Wisdom, Beauty and Design of Providence by any particular instances of it disjointed and separate from the whole System."

Besides the Afflictions of good Men are often brought upon them by the instrumentality of their Fellow-creature, whose Methods and Ends are apparently wicked; and we are inclined to gaze upon these secondary means and instruments in forming a Judgment of the Providence it self, which is apt to obscure the true nature and design of it. But God's ways are not Mens ways, nor his thoughts their thoughts. His ends in suffering Afflictions to befall his People, are often contrary to the ends and designs of Men by whom they are brought about: A flagrant instance of this we have in the sufferings and death of Christ.

If we consider this Tragedy with relation to the bloody Conspirators and Actors in it, it appears shocking and detestable. We see in this Scene, Pride, Covetousness, Malice, Revenge, and almost every Vice triumphing over Humility, Meekness, perfect Innocence, in a word, over one in whom all Virtue centred and dwelt: and who ever looks no farther than this, and considers the whole Transactions in such a disadvantageous Light, can't but highly censure and condemn it. But God, as we are told, had noble Ends, wor-

⁴ Dr. Lucas.

thy of himself in this Affair, and such as render'd it the most glorious display of all his Perfections that ever the World was blest with. Thus it may be said of other Providences, that they appear dark and shocking to us, because our minds are prejudiced with the ill designs of wicked Men, by whose means they are brought about; not considering that God's ends in suffering such things, are vastly different from theirs, and as good as theirs are bad.

And if we add to all this, that our Judgments are in these matters apt to be perverted and turn'd aside from the Laws of Equity and Truth, by our blind and turbulent Passions; we shall, I'm apt to think, see still more reason to be reconciled to our ignorance of the special Reasons and Ends of many Providences. What we long and desire after, we think it hard to have deny'd us; and we are apt to pine at the loss of what we fondly love and value. And such importunate struggles and remonstrances of our Affections blind the Eyes of the Mind, and pervert the Judgment, and so cause many of the divine Dispensations to appear clouded and dark; which, if survey'd with an impartial Eye, would appear reasonable and just. When our earnest wishes are thwarted, we pronounce such a Providence to be against us; whereas did we weigh it in the ballance of the Sanctuary, by the principles of Religion and right Reason, it would be found to be quite otherwise.

Thus, I hope, I have sufficiently proved, that the darkness and obscurity of Providence is no Objection in Reason against it; nor any Argument to justify a fretful and impatient Temper of Mind under those Trials and Afflictions which seem to militate with our true Happiness. I
say,

say, which seem to militate, because the incongruity is only in our own Apprehension. For it ought to be consider'd, that if our Afflictions render us, as 'tis pretended in the Objection, incapable of some particular external Acts of moral goodness, to which we are inclined and disposed, such as Acts of Charity and Devotion; it ought to be consider'd, I say, that perhaps these virtuous Habits are tolerably well improved and confirm'd already, and that others as necessary and important, are growing weak and languid, for want of such Providences as we complain of, to rouse and invigorate them. And it should be consider'd too, that these good and pious Dispositions and Desires are nevertheless pleasing to God, and advantageous to our selves, altho the execution of them is put out of our power by means of some external impediment, which Providence has thrown in our way. God who sees in secret, and searches the Heart, accounts of Men according to the Integrity of their Intentions, and not according to their outward Condition; and therefore the Man of a truly charitable Temper, or of a devout Disposition of Soul, shall at last meet with as ample a reward, as if his Ability and Circumstances gave him the pleasure of abounding in external acts of Charity or Devotion: so that upon the whole, the good Man's main Interest is no sufferer by such Providences as have been mention'd.

2. I shall now endeavour to shew, that our ignorance of the special reasons of any Afflictions does not render us incapable of making a good and profitable use and improvement of them. For there are many Duties, which are apparently proper to be attended to and practis'd on such occasions, the neglect of which cannot be excused by any pretences of Mystery and Darkness in the Providence with which we are exercised. For
instance,

instance, Patience should at such Seasons have its perfect work. Patience and Resignation to God under Afflictions, are Duties of great importance, highly necessary, acceptable to God, and profitable to our selves. And nothing has a greater tendency to exercise and improve these divine Graces and Virtues, than such Trials which are dark and mysterious. Thus we find when *Job's* Patience and Resignation were to be proved and vindicated against the false Insinuations of Satan, he was not only to be loaded with a complication of aggravated Misfortunes and Afflictions, but the special Reasons of them were to be hid from him. The more dark and intricate the Providence is, the fitter opportunity is there for Patience and Resignation to exert and shew themselves. Moreover such Afflictions are proper to awaken us to a due consideration of our Ways; and a thorow and impartial Examination of our Hearts and Lives, the most likely way to find out and amend what has been amiss in both. Besides, we may learn from all Afflictions, even those which are dark and intricate, that all sub-lunary Enjoyments are uncertain and frail, like broken Reeds, or *Jonah's* Gourd, which sprang up and perish'd in a night: And therefore we should not set our Affections on any thing here, but on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right Hand of God; on those celestial Riches which are durable, and not liable to corruption or to be taken from us. Finally we may learn from all such Afflictions to prepare for Death, and another World, when, if we so number our Days here as to apply our Hearts to Wisdom, we shall obtain a perfect and complete Deliverance out of all our Troubles, and enter into a state of eternal Rest and Peace. And this brings me,

III. To

III. To shew the Sense and Import of the other Proposition of the Psalmist, namely, *But the Lord delivereth him out of them all.*

And as I have all along had an Eye to this Deliverance in treating upon the former Part of the Text, there is the less need to enlarge upon it here. It may be considered as respecting either this Life or that which is to come.

I. If it be consider'd as relating to this Life, it cannot be design'd to assure the good Man, that all his external Afflictions shall be intirely removed in his Life-time; or that he shall before he dies have a full and perfect Release from all earthly Troubles and Vexations. Possibly this may be the Case of some good Men, and perhaps *David* was favour'd with such a happy Turn in his Affairs, when he compos'd this Psalm. But if we suppose he design'd it for general Use to the Righteous, in future Time and Ages, even to the End of the World, he can't be thought to mean, by these words, that all righteous Men should, like himself, be deliver'd out of all their external Calamities in the present State. This is more than can be certainly depended upon, and if this Promise be stretch'd to such a length, we shall frequently be forced to give up our Charity in order to reconcile it with matter of fact. There have been in all Ages Instances of Men, who have given indubitable Proofs of their Sincerity and Uprightness, who yet have conflict'd with Troubles and Disappointments to their dying day. Their Afflictions have been great and many, and they have carried them to their Graves. Now 'twould be very harsh and uncharitable to exclude such Persons out of the Number of the Righteous,

Righteous, because they did not obtain a Deliverance in this Life from their external Ills and Calamities.

We must therefore interpret this Expression, and others of the same nature, in a Sense which will suit the Cases of all good Men, and render it a sure Foundation of their Faith and Hope. And I think these two things may safely be collected from it.

(1.) That if the Righteous seek the Lord, and resign themselves up to him, however their external Calamities and Afflictions may continue, they shall obtain an inward and spiritual Deliverance. By which I mean that their Minds shall be suited to their Condition, and they shall have strength according to their Day. Thus *David* could say, under great Afflictions, that ⁸ *tho his Flesh and his Heart failed him, yet God was the strength of his Heart.* And 'tis on this account that the Prophet styles the Lord, ⁹ *his People's Strength in Trouble.* Such a Deliverance therefore the Righteous may expect in this Life, if they are not wanting in their Trust and Confidence in God. The Infirmities of their Bodies shall be sustain'd with a proportionate Strength and Firmness of Soul: Their Disappointments and Crosses shall be compensated with a seasonable Fortitude and Bravery of Mind, which shall keep them from Dejection: And the Diminution of their Substance shall be attended with an equal abatement and contraction of their Desires. And thus the good Man is deliver'd from the worst and most grievous part of his Afflictions, *viz.* a temper and disposition of Mind repugnant and opposite to his external State and Condition. His heavenly Father

⁸ Psal. lxxiii. 26.

⁹ Nahum i. 7.

by his Grace establishes a harmony and agreement between the habitude and frame of his Mind and his Circumstances, and hereby amidst Storms and Tempests he enjoys a Calm ; and tho troubled on every side, yet being possess'd of that Peace which the World can neither give nor take away, he can say with *St. Paul*, that *he is not distressed*¹. God in the midst of the good Man's Afflictions, calls up his Mind, his Thoughts, his Meditations, his Desires, and his Hopes, from Earth to Heaven ; and enables him with generous Courage to bear, as light, those Evils, which would otherwise bear down his Spirits, and prove a Burden too heavy to be supported. His God gently raises him above his Miseries, adds Wings to his Faith and Hope, enables him to soar aloft to those things within the Veil, and which are invisible to the bodily Eye. And thus being lifted up above the Cares and Anxieties of this Earth, he dwells as it were in a calm and undisturbed Region, and looks down with a noble Indifference on the Afflictions of the present time, as not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed in him². This is what the good Man may expect, in a sincere and constant discharge of his Duty. And this is a Deliverance of the greatest value and importance. 'Twas what *St. Paul* obtain'd upon his Prayer to God, when he had a Thorn in the Flesh, and the Messenger of Satan sent to buffet him. God perhaps did not see it meet to discharge him from those Trials, whatever they were, that he complain'd of and prayed against ; but he promised him an Equivalent, *that his Grace should be sufficient for him*. But tho what I have mention'd is a very consider-

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 8.² Rom. viii. 18.

able Deliverance, yet 'tis not all that the Righteous may expect from the Assurance in the Text. For,

(2.) He may expect, without fear or danger of a Disappointment, that as God afflicts him as a tender and compassionate Father, for his good, and only when such discipline is needful; so, that he shall be deliver'd from his outward as well as inward Trouble, so soon as the reason of their being inflicted ceases, and the good Ends of them are accomplished. And sooner than this, sure no wise Man would wish to be deliver'd out of them. For to be released from such Trials, before they have answer'd their End, is so far from being a Discovery of Mercy and Compassion in God, that 'tis an Expression of his Wrath and hot Displeasure. Such a Deliverance is granted as a Curse, and is a Consequence of Mens being given up as desperate and irreclaimable. Just as Parents cease to correct their rebellious Children, when they find it to no purpose; so God ceases to chastise the Sons of Men when they grow incorrigible under the Rod, and revolt more and more.

And this may serve to account for the reason, why some righteous Men have more, some less Trials in this Life; and why some obtain a speedy Deliverance, and others have their Afflictions continued from Year to Year, and sometimes to the time of their Death. The Trials of the former did not require any long continuance; but tho the latter may be eminently virtuous, and their good Works may shine brightly before Men, yet God sees 'twould be worse with them in this respect should he release 'em intirely from their Afflictions, and indulge them with a state of Ease

and Prosperity. And hence as a tender and compassionate Father he repeats his Severities, and continues them under such wholesom tho unpleasant discipline, till they lay down their Bodies in the Graves, where the weary are at rest. And this leads me,

2. To consider this Deliverance of the Righteous, as it relates to another World. The Proposition is strictly and literally true, if refer'd to the state of good Men after Death. For whatever Afflictions they endure here, and to whatever length they are drawn out and extended; yet they shall at death be deliver'd out of them all. If they carry their Burden to the Grave, there they drop it, and shall take it up no more. Hence the state of good Men after death, is call'd a *Rest*⁴: for they *rest from their Labours*. This is fully and expressly asserted by St. John, when speaking of the Saints in Heaven he says: *'All Tears shall be wiped away from their Eyes; and there shall be no more Death, neither Sorrow nor Crying, neither shall there be any more Pain: for the former things are past away, i. e. all causes of Trouble and Sorrow shall in Heaven be taken away.* And indeed 'tis highly reasonable to conclude that the Righteous shall after death be deliver'd out of all his Troubles and Calamities, if it be consider'd that there the Reason and Ends of them cease. The general End of Afflictions is, that the good may be made better, that they may be purged and refined from their Sin and Dross, have their corrupt Habits weaken'd and destroy'd, and be improved in Holiness and Virtue.

But after death the Righteous shall be refined to a true Standard, be intirely cleansed from moral Defilements, and be confirmed and established in all the Principles of Virtue and Holiness.

⁴ Job iii. 17. ⁵ Heb. iv. 9. ⁵ Rev. xxi. 4.

And, oh! what pleasure and satisfaction must it minister to the Saints above, to reflect upon their earthly Trials, as over and past, and as now no longer necessary! Yes, may the Righteous then say, I was afflicted on Earth, to cleanse me from my Sins, but now I find myself clean. I endured many Temptations, for the exercise and improvement of my Graces, but now they are perfected; my Faith is turn'd into Sight, my Hope into Enjoyment; my Love to God is now bright and flaming, and my delight in his Service constant and uninterrupted; I am now what my Afflictions were design'd to make me, holy as God is holy. And what an addition to his Happiness must the remembrance of his past Afflictions make, when he shall be able to look back and perceive the harmonious Tendency of all for his good? For 'tis reasonable to suppose that the Righteous in another World will be able to discern this happy Agreement and Efficacy of all Providences in which himself was concern'd on Earth. For when the Soul shall be uncloth'd, not only of the cumbersome Garment of Flesh, but also of the thick Veil of Sin and evil Concupiscence, which here blinds its Eyes, and hinders its Penetration, 'twill discern more clearly and pass a better Judgment on things, than now it can. Hence we may conclude, that what appears now dark and mysterious, will then appear plain and easy; and Providences, which now are too mighty for us, will then emerge out of the abyss of Obscurity, and be thorowly understood. Especially considering, that as the Mind shall be then set at liberty from its dark Confinement, and render'd more susceptible of Knowledge, so all the Providences of God relating to us, shall have finished their Course; so that the

capacious

capacious Soul will be able to contemplate them altogether, as they lie in a beautiful Connection with relation to and dependence upon one another. A whole Train and Series of Dispensations in an exact order will then perhaps be exhibited to the View of the Righteous, with all the advantages of Beauty and Concord amidst Variety. Then the first, and the last, and all intermediate Providences, will be presented as in a Landskip, in one comprehensive View. And when Providence shall have thus made its Revolution, those Instances of it which seem'd obscure when consider'd alone, and in a separate, disjointed state, will be clear'd up by others antecedent and subsequent to them; and the Thoughts may spread themselves with pleasure upon a Subject, which here seem'd too difficult, and unravel a thousand Mysteries which before were inexplicable. Wisdom and Design will then appear to run thro' the whole Labyrinth of Providence; and Contemplation shall be able to trace it thro' all the windings and involutions of the divine Conduct, in which the wisest of Men here lose and bewilder themselves.

Indeed what less can be expected, than the clearest Discoveries of the Wisdom and Beauty of Providence, when the enlarged Mind shall have a full Prospect of a whole System of it at once? and which is more than all the rest, God himself will condescend to let us into the Reasons of his own Conduct, as far as we can desire to be acquainted with it, however in this probationary State he saw it proper sometimes to wrap himself up in Clouds and Darknefs. And, Lord, in what a different View will our many Afflictions then appear, from what they now bear. Then those Troubles, which we thought made against
us,

us, will be found to be highly necessary and profitable. Here, says my God, here's the Providence that puzzled and shock'd thy Reason on Earth, and for which thou wert ready to arraign and condemn the equity and wisdom of my Conduct; see here the unreasonableness of thy Clamours against it, behold what noble Ends were accomplished and brought about by it, and what momentous Consequences depended upon it. This, and that, and a thousand other Blessings sprang from it; and now instead of censuring it as absurd or unequal, learn to admire it as one great occasion and means of thy present Happiness.

But let us not venture too far beyond our Depth. 'Tis certain that the Deliverance, which the righteous shall obtain after Death, will not only free them from all Afflictions and Troubles, but be attended with exquisite Joy and Pleasure; which shall be unspeakably heighten'd and improv'd by the reflection on their earthly Troubles and Afflictions, and the Tendency of them to fit and dispose them for their present state of Purity and Happiness.

IV. And now 'tis time to close this long Discourse with a few Remarks, suitable to the Subject, and the melancholy Occasion of this Solemnity. And,

1. Tho the first part of our Text is only declarative of the condition of good Men in this Life, and is illustrated and confirm'd by a multitude of instances in every Age; yet as it stands upon sacred Record, 'tis of singular use, and deserves our frequent and serious meditation. For when 'tis consider'd as a truth coming from the mouth of

one inspired by God, that the Afflictions of the righteous are many, Men of this Character will easily learn to expect such Trials, and submit to them as appointed by God for their Lot and Portion. Nay, 'twill tend mightily to support them under their Calamity, to consider that Men much greater and better than themselves have endured Afflictions, and that such Providences are not inconsistent with God's special Love. In a word, such Scriptures will keep the good Man from expecting more from Religion than 'twas design'd for; and from concluding under Afflictions that he hath cleansed his Heart, and washed his Hands in innocence in vain; especially if to this Proposition, *Many are the Afflictions of the righteous*, he connects what follows in the Text, *But the Lord delivereth him out of them all.*

2. This should teach us the necessity of living by Faith. For to think only upon their Troubles, is enough to sink the Spirits of the Righteous, and bring them to say with *David*, that *their Afflictions are too heavy for them to bear.* But a strong Faith in the Promises of God, will bear them up amidst all the Evils of this Life. When the good Man can persuade himself (and he has foundation enough in the promise of God for such a persuasion) that his Afflictions shall last no longer than till they have answer'd the Ends for which they were appointed; and that in the mean time he shall have strength according to his Day; such a Faith will tend to quiet the Mind, calm every angry Passion, and bring him patiently to hope for better times. But if his Faith stretches it self beyond Time into Eternity, and brings him to contemplate the perfect and compleat deliverance which he shall obtain after Death; he will be enabled to rejoice in Affliction, considering *that the suffering*

sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed in him.

3. This should make the good Man long for Heaven. This World it seems is a vale of Tears, in which the best of Men converse with Troubles, are encompass'd with Sorrows, and like the Captain of their Salvation acquainted with Grievs. But after Death, all Tears shall be wiped away from their Eyes, and there shall be no more Sorrow nor Crying. Who then would not with St. Paul, *desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better?*

4. Lastly, we should learn from hence, not immoderately to mourn for the Loss of our Friends, who are departed in the Lord. Their Presence and pious Conversation were perhaps very endearing and desirable; but the consideration of that inexpressible Gain and Happiness, their removal from us has put them into the possession of, should temper and alleviate our Grief, and almost dry up our Tears. They are gone from a world of Snares, Sorrows, and Disappointments, into the Regions of bliss, *where there is fulness of Joy and Pleasures for ever more.* They are by Death deliver'd out of all their Afflictions, and are now contemplating with clearness and certainty, the Reasons, and admiring the Beauty and Wisdom of those Providences, which here seem'd so disagreeable and shocking. They are now tracing the happy tendency and efficacy of those Dispensations, which look'd in this Life with so gloomy and threatening an Aspect. And can we be inconsolable for the Loss of such Friends, who sleep in Jesus, and are gone to inherit the Promises, on which they had anchor'd their Hope in this Life?

And

And here methinks I would address my self to the surviving Relatives of our deceased Friend and Brother. Your Loss it must be confess'd is great. Death has snatch'd from you a Friend, an Husband, a Father, whom you had reason to love and value. But you are to consider that he is taken away from all his past Troubles, and is enter'd upon that state of Rest, which remains for the People of God. I know you are well satisfy'd he was one of them, whom our Author in the Text styles righteous. Indeed he gave such full Proofs of his Integrity and Uprightness in the general course of his Conversation, that I believe all, who knew him, must esteem him to have been a good and religious Man.

He was naturally of a free open Temper, and his Conversation was facetious and pleasant; but then he took care to mix and temper it with a Seriousness becoming the importance of Religion. He kept himself unspotted from the World, and would not comply with the Vices of the Times. For tho he was far from affecting Singularity in matters of indifference, but would conform to those Customs which he thought innocent and consistent with a good Conscience; yet he carefully shun'd vicious ones, and *would not follow a multitude to do Evil.*

He took care to grace his Profession of Religion, by practising the Duties of every Relation.

He was a chaste and kind Husband, a tender and affectionate Father. In his Conduct towards his Children, he took care to maintain his parental Authority, and at the same time to treat them with an engaging familiarity, which were so wisely mix'd and temper'd together, that he at once drew both their Love and Reverence.

If we consider him in the capacity of a Trader, we see Justice and Honesty guiding and regulating all his Transactions; insomuch that of the vast number of Servants he employ'd for many Years, none can justly complain of oppression, or being defrauded of his hire. And of the many with whom he negotiated in buying and selling, not any one can charge him with unfair Usage, or breach of Contract. For many Years he managed great Business very honourably, and with such regularity and order, that he found leisure to enjoy his Friends, and serve his God. And when his bodily infirmities obliged him to quit it, he retired with Reputation and Credit, but to the grief of his poor Dependants, who lamented the Loss of so good a Master.

If we view him as a Member of civil Society, we see in him a zealous Patriot, one heartily concern'd for the Rights and Liberties of his Country, and upon many occasions sacrificing his own private Interest to that of the Publick.

If we regard him as a Christian, he was a Man heartily attach'd to the Interest of Religion in general, and of catholick Charity for all good Men of every Denomination. But his Care was chiefly employ'd for the support and encouragement of that Part of the catholick Church to which he professedly adhered, and gave up himself. But then 'twas with a due regard to the Peace and Welfare of the whole Body, which should always bound and direct the Christian Zeal and Concern for any one Branch or Member of it.

He express'd a very great Concern for the good of this Society, of which he continued many Years an honourable and useful Member. He was exemplary for his constant Attendance on the publick

publick Service of the Church, on all Occasions. 'Twas a rare thing to see his Place empty in the House of God, either on the Lord's-day, or at any other time. Nay, he would break thro' a great many Difficulties which lay in his way, and frequently such as many others would have reckon'd sufficient Excuses for their Absence. The very last time of his appearing abroad was in the House of God, when his Illness was so great that he could hardly endure the length of the Service; and his Friends thought him fitter for his Bed, than any other Place. Nor was it enough with him to encourage publick and social Worship with his own presence, but he would take care to have his Family with him too. And thus he trod in the Steps of good *Joshua*, who could say, *As for me and my House, we will serve the Lord.*

Thus lived this good Man the Life of the Righteous, and no wonder then if his last End was like his. He express'd upon his Death-bed an intire Satisfaction, was not afraid to die, and to give an Account of himself to his merciful and righteous Judge, having conceived good hopes that he should sleep in Jesus, and that Death would be his Gain. When he found himself just launching out of Time into Eternity, he call'd his Children around his Bed, and gave them one by one his paternal Blessing and dying Charge, and then gave up the Ghost.

And now he is deliver'd out of all his Troubles, and enter'd upon a state of Rest, where he shall feel no more Pain nor Sorrow. Many were his Afflictions here, but now his Warfare is accomplish'd, his Trials are at an End, his Tears rewarded with Rivers of Pleasure, and he, I doubt not, receiving *Beauty for Ashes, the Oil of Joy for Mourning,*

*Mourning, and the Garment of Praise for the Spirit of
Heaviness.*

As he lived an honourable Life, so he has left
an honourable Character behind him, amongst all
Parties both in Church and State.

To the sorrowful Widow, therefore, and Chil-
dren of our deceased Friend I would say, *Comfort
your selves with these things.* Instead of grieving ex-
cessively under your Loss, endeavour to be Fol-
lowers of him, as far as he was of Christ; and
then his God shall be your God, and the Blessings
that proceeded from his dying Lips shall descend
upon you in this Life, and you shall at last go to
him, tho he will never, never, return to you.

4 AP 62

F I N I S.

